After the Palm Sunday service with its outdoor procession featuring incense, palm leaves, and kazoos, Adult Choir members and their families continued the festivities at their annual potluck brunch hosted by Marilyn Conklin and John Docherty. Not only does the yearly event foster a sense of community, it buoys choir members for the additional rehearsals and services during Holy Week. This year, despite the drama of a collapsing buffet table just as guests were arriving, disaster was averted and mimosas were quickly consumed by the hosts. Fred Berndt’s specially-requested rhubarb torte did not disappoint, nor did any of the other offerings, including a pork loin with tasty sauce, courtesy of Sarah Stengle, and mini strawberry shortcakes prepared by Alto Lay Clerk Valerie Weaver. Given the particularly nice weather this year, guests enjoyed sitting outside on the patio. The choir is looking forward to the rest of the season, fortified by muffins, frittata, tossed salad, and Bundt cake.
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**STAY CONNECTED**

Don’t miss out on any of our news and events!

- Sign up for our weekly e-newsletter at www.tinyurl.com/sjcnnews
- See our online calendar and subscribe to site updates at www.stjohnsstpaul.org
- Like our Facebook page at www.tinyurl.com/sjfbf

**ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

**Clergy**

  The Rev. Jered Weber-Johnson, Rector
  The Rev. Kate Bradmiller, Associate Rector
  The Rev. Margaret Tho, Deacon

**Staff**

  Sarah Dall, Parish Administrator
  Jayson R. Engevik, Director of Music/Organist
  Terry Farrell, Building-Assistant
  Jean Hamer, Children, Youth, & Family Minister
  Heather Hawn, Children & Youth Christian Educator
  Tracey Johnson, Nursery Coordinator
  Scott Jungbraut, Building Manager
  The Rev. Craig Lemming, Campus Coordinator
  The Rev. Barbara Mine, Writer in Residence
  Jane Johnson, Office of the Treasurer
  Ellie Watkins, Communications Assistant
  Donna Werner, Building-Assistant
  Kellan Weyer, Children, Youth, & Family Assistant

**Vestry Members**

  Bob Baumann, Clerk of Vestry
  Jay Clark, At-Large
  Marlin Coupland, Junior Warden
  Josh Colton, At-Large
  Tom Evans, At-Large
  Alice Johnson, At-Large
  John MacBain, Junior Warden
  Duane Maier, At-Large
  Chris Marxer, At-Large
  Brad Parsons, At-Large
  Rick Rinkoff, Treasurer
  Peter Rosendale, At-Large
  Judy Stack-Nelson, Formation
  Diane Wallace-Reid, At-Large
  Penny Wellington, Music
  Jerry Woelfel, Senior Warden

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**ON THE COVER:**


**NEXT DEADLINE** for July/August Issue: June 9

Everyone is encouraged to submit articles and reflections. Bring your article and/or photos to the church office or email to church@stjohnsstpaul.org before the deadline shown. Thank you!

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**SERVICE SCHEDULES**

**ALTAR GUILD**

  Diane Power, Altar Guild Coordinator (jpapotter6@gmail.com)
  May 7: 8am Craig Lindeke
          10am Judy Southwick, Gary Gleason
  May 14: 8am Joan McCanna
          10am Diane Wallace-Reid, Terry Dinwiddie
  May 21: 8am Jay Debertin
          10am Camille Schell, Keith Davis
  May 28: 8am Brad McCanna
          10am John Graham, Carole Selin
  Up-to-date schedules can always be found at www.stjohnsstpaul.org/worship-music/altar-guild

**USHERS:**

  John MacBain, Head Usher (jamacbain@gmail.com)
  May 7: Bob Baumann, Marvin Cadwell, Gary & Paige Hagstrom
  May 14: Julia Ferguson & Rick Rinkoff, Sally Sand, Kevin Wall
  May 21: Cammie Beattie, Patty Byrne Pfalz, Barbara Lindeke, Shirley Sailors
  May 28: Lynn Hertz, Don Husband, George Kinkead, John MacBain
  June 4: Alden Drew & Minnie Polland, Holly & Don Weinkauf
  June 11: Mary & Peter Gilbertson, Jennifer & Peter Rosendale
  June 18: Bob Baumann, Marvin Cadwell, Jeff & Peggy Olsen
  June 25: Gary & Paige Hagstrom, Diane Power, Shirley Sailors
  Up-to-date schedules can always be found at www.stjohnsstpaul.org/worship-music/ushers

**COFFEE HOUR**

  Paige Hagstrom, Coffee Hour Coordinator (phagstrom@gmail.com)
  May 7: Godly Play families
  May 14: Jill & John Thompson
  May 21: Service Sunday
  May 28: Lyelle & Mary Palmer
  June 4: Kathy Brown
  June 11: Waveney Bishop
  June 18: Joanne & Rod MacDonald
  June 25: Kate & Louisa Bradmiller
  Up-to-date schedules can always be found at www.stjohnsstpaul.org/worship-music/coffee-hour

**GREETERS**

  Jeff Olsen, Head Greeter (jolsen4338@gmail.com)
  May 7: Cindy Berthau, Colleen Swope, Don Weinkauf
  May 14: Judy Stack-Nelson, Jerry Woelfel & Becky Garthofner
  May 21: Jeff & Peggy Olsen, Lea Anne Schmidt
  May 28: Gabrielle Lawrence & Don Postema, Judy Southwick
  June 4: Jennifer Kinkead, Sally Sand, Diane Wallace-Reid
  June 11: Bob Baumann, Colleen Swope, Don Weinkauf
  June 18: Barbara Lindeke, Jennifer & Peter Rosendale
  June 25: Lea Anne Schmidt, Jerry Woelfel & Becky Garthofner
  Up-to-date schedules can always be found at www.stjohnsstpaul.org/worship-music/greeters

**ACOLYTES**

  Ellie Watkins, Acolyte Coordinator (elfe@elizabeth.watkins@stjohnsstpaul.org)
  May 7: Charlie Docherty, Madeleine J., Roan Weinkauf
  May 14: Thea Bischoff, Tessa Johnson, Maren Johnson, Aidan Schmidt
  May 21: Matt Brooks, Will Rinkoff, Ailsa Schmidt, Elliott Wall
  May 28: Caroline Krall, Linnea Krall, Sabine Krall
  June 4: Charlie Docherty, Madeleine J., Roan Weinkauf
  June 11: Tessa Johnson, Maren Johnson, Elliott Wall, Aidan Schmidt
  June 18: Barbara Lindeke, Jennifer & Peter Rosendale
  June 25: Caroline Krall, Linnea Krall, Sabine Krall
  Up-to-date schedules can always be found at www.stjohnsstpaul.org/worship-music/acolytes

**READERS**

  Joan Potter, Liturgical & Lay Reader Coordinator (jpapotter6@gmail.com)
  May 7: 8am Craig Lindeke
          10am Judy Southwick, Gary Gleason
  May 14: 8am Joan McCanna
          10am Diane Wallace-Reid, Terry Dinwiddie
  May 21: 8am Jay Debertin
          10am Camille Schell, Keith Davis
  May 28: 8am Brad McCanna
          10am John Graham, Carole Selin
  Up-to-date schedules can always be found at www.stjohnsstpaul.org/worship-music/lay-readers

**VERGERS**

  Joan Potter, Liturgical & Lay Reader Coordinator (jpapotter6@gmail.com)
  May 7: Joan Potter
  May 14: Carole Selin
  May 21: Bill Sherfey
  May 28: Keith Davis
  Up-to-date schedules can always be found at www.stjohnsstpaul.org/worship-music/vergers
May
1 Beth Ternetola
2 David Borton
3 Steve Avery
4 Cameron Gemlo
5 Leslie Mercer
6 Bill Lindeke
7 Megan McKeehan
Jackson Scheel
Kimberly Borton
John Kinkead
Greta Paige Lightner
John Nicholson
7 John MacBain
8 Julia Brown
9 Amelia Brandt
10 Michael Halvorson
Rod Titchcomb
10 Melissa Ek
11 Jim Johnson
20 Patrick Joyce
Estelle Berger-
Thompson
21 Danielle Edgerton
22 Andy Olsen
23 Virginia Edgerton
24 Margot Harrington
25 Judy Diedrich
26 Randy Ross
27 Rob Binger
30 Barbara Lindeke
31 Kathy Brown
Maren Johnson
June
3 Linda Zeilig
4 Christopher Matter
5 Dick Diedrich
6 Kathleen Hanson
7 Mary Johnson
Barbara Sommers
8 Harrison Smith
9 Jamie Wood
10 Oliver McLarnon
11 Jonas Rutherford Grill
12 Patrick Schmidt
9 Berry Myers
Benoni Grimes
Joe Yangspard
10 Don Husband
Phyllis Golf
11 Sue Macintosh
Edward Pfeiffer
Elise McCray
12 Justin Gourley
Richard Neuner
Hannah Ross
13 Craig Lindeke
Delilah Page
Sam Ryan
14 Peter Lund
Laura Holland
John Ternetola
Miles Bowman
Clifford Brown
Dagan McCall
Ed Cook
Diane Wallace-Reid
Bill Sherfy
Lara Strum
Charles Foote
John Ternetola
Ailsa Schmidt
Susan McCarthy
Rianna Matter
Theodore O'Brien
Pam Clamson
Eva Gemlo
Laura Kinkead
Jeff Olsen
Sharon Kleckner
Genevieve Solids
Caroline Jaffray
Henry Powers
Susie Ragland
Whit Morley
John Kinkelad
Sandy Straton-Rusche
Cindy Bachman
Dean Ramos
Peter Fish
Craig Solids

FROM THE REVEREND JERED WEBER-JOHNSON
Dear Friends in Christ,
For over a year now the parish, our vestry, staff, and key committees and
commissions have been working on our goal to grow Saint John’s. Growth doesn’t happen overnight and is often
unpredictable. But, we know some things to be true. A
growing church can often better sustain its programs and
ministries and more effectively pursue God’s mission in
the world. Growing churches need intentional systems of
inorporation and connection for growth to last. Growth
cannot be the ultimate goal for congregations—growth
must be a means toward a spiritually vibrant,
compassionate, outward-looking, and Christlike
community. Growth is hard work.
While growing churches are not without their own
unique challenges and conflicts, we have chosen, for a
variety of good reasons, to grow. We believe we are already
beginning to grow. Over the past four years, as we’ve put
more energy and time into new member ministry, we’ve
seen an increasing influx of new members—many of you
have joined the parish in that time, and we are grateful for
all that you have brought to our common life. This
spring’s Basics class (an eight-week course that describes
the essentials of Anglican thought and Christian life, which
we strongly recommend to all new members) has been our
biggest yet. If all goes as we hope, this May we’ll welcome
one of the largest groups of new members to Saint John’s.
These are people who, like all of you, are looking for
spiritual grounding, to make sense of their life in the world
and their life in Christ, and who are trying to find a
community where they are welcome and belong.

Growth is hard work. With more people come challenges. Just as
larger classes in school require more teachers, better room
layout, and better planning of the daily schedule—to a
 growing congregation requires some realignment of
resources, staff, and planning.
At our annual meeting in January, our Treasurer, Rick
Rinkoff, highlighted the vestry’s recommitment to growth.
We dedicated a small designated fund as seed money to
create a position for growth and membership in 2017. We
also committed to raising the remaining funds to make that
position a reality. We hope to hire a half-time Coordinator
of Growth and Member Engagement. As of April, that
position has been fully funded and advertised, and by the
time you read this, candidates will be being considered.
In the past year, we’ve relied heavily on strong lay
leadership from our New Member Committee, and
especially our current chair, Lea Anne Schmidt. We have
come to realize this excellent work cannot be sustained by
volunteers alone. We need greater staff support to cover
everything required to sustain growth and member
engagement. As we look to hire, our current New Member
committee is also growing and expanding and is dividing
into three separate teams to support all that New Member
Ministry requires—bread ministry, greeters, invitation,
Companions on the Way (a peer/mentor ministry that
pairs newcomers with existing members), Basics Classes,
Discovery Classes, and so much more.
God calls us to grow as individuals and as communities.
We have an abundance of gifts to share with the wider
world at Saint John’s, and as we grow more people are
going to experience those gifts. I invite you to pray with
me for the work of our New Member Committee and for
the candidates that apply to come alongside us in the work
of growing our community.
I also invite you to consider how you, too, can be a part
of the work of growing as an individual and in community.
It might mean getting to know someone you’ve never met.
Taking someone from Saint John’s for coffee and listening
to their story. Perhaps you can pray for our visitors and
newcomers. Perhaps you can introduce two visitors to two
people you already know. This is part of the vital work of
the body of Christ—to welcome all people into this
community of faith and to be built up in the knowledge
and love of God.
I will see you in worship!
Faithfully,
Jered T.
ON MAY 7, SAINT JOHN’S WILL CELEBRATE NEW MEMBER SUNDAY AND WELCOME A NUMBER OF FAMILIES INTO OUR FAITH COMMUNITY. READ ON TO GET TO KNOW SOME OF THEM A LITTLE BETTER AND SAY HELLO NEXT TIME YOU SEE THEM!

ERIĆ & GWEN ODNEY

Eric and Gwen are originally from Fargo, ND. They have lived in the Como Park area for over 20 years. They were cradle Episcopalians, then joined the Roman Catholic Church, and are now back in the Episcopal Church. They are looking for community and liturgy. They have both felt very welcomed here.

Eric is retired from Wells Fargo and Gwen retired from the St. Paul School District. She taught elementary students in a Montessori School on the east side of St. Paul. They have 3 grown children (2 daughters and a son) and 8 grandchildren in St. Paul and California. They adopted a rescue beagle from Louisiana after Hurricane Rita. They both love to travel. Eric enjoys reading and Gwen likes cross-stitching and embroidery. She is learning to knit prayer shawls at Saint John’s. Gwen also volunteers in the St. Paul Schools. It has been a delight getting to know Eric and Gwen. They are very warm, caring, and fun people. We are blessed that they have chosen to become members here.

BETH TANI

Barb comes to us from Sun Lake. She is in search of a faith community with emphasis on the “community,” where people gather together to get involved in various aspects of hands-on outreach. She feels Saint John’s has a strong level of involvement.

Barb originated her faith journey in the Roman Catholic church. She was introduced to Saint John’s by the Ashcroft’s, good friends of both her and her husband, Paul. They have 3 grown daughters and 5 grandchildren in California and New York.

A retired elementary teacher, Barb has a wide range of interests, including especially literacy, community development, and women and families. Early childhood is of particular emphasis, since it is so pivotal in how we form and develop. Two of her hobbies include travel and cooking.

“We're fortunate to add such a friendly, energetic, and interesting member to Saint John's! Introduce yourself when you see her if she doesn't get to you first!

BY THEA BISCHOF

My mentor Trish and I had many discussions about how God is at work in our world and how we can make a positive impact in the world by living by God's image. These discussions inspired me to live by the Baptismal Covenant and strive to promote peace every day.

We also went to an exhibit at the Minneapolis Institute of Art and saw how God inspired artists and craftsmen at the time of the Reformation. The handwork was exquisite and demonstrated how God's gifts can shine through the objects of everyday life.

I think God has given me the gift of empathy, and my current goal is to become a social worker.

CONFIRMATION REFLECTIONS

Confirmation isn't an end, but a beginning. As part of the confirmation program for youth at Saint John's, young people (confirmands) are paired with mature Christian adults in their parish community who will walk alongside them as they discern who they are as a Christian. This pairing strengthens the youth's understanding of the faith while connecting him or her with the community of believers in a personal way.

Christianity is a way of life together. The preparation for this must be experiential and personal, suggesting that confirmation doesn't end our growth as Christians. This experience has proven to be formative for both the mentor and the confirmand. Two of the people who recently walked this road, confirmand Thea Bischof and mentor John Graham, share their reflections:

By Jean Hansen

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By John Graham

Sometime last spring, Jean Hansen asked me if I would be willing to mentor a candidate for Confirmation. She wasn't sure when – it turned out to be about a year later. I agreed to this commitment, and shortly after I met with Will, my “mentee” (a term we both despise – sounds like something out of an aquarium. We decided on “candidate,” the first of many things on which we agree.) We met, quite frequently, actually, either at Church in the hall outside what used to be called the Fireside Room, or, in the summer, in the parking lot by the Farmers’ Market. We also visited Mai Village (in their final week), a Grand Avenue pizza parlour, and went on a group trip to the Martin Luther exhibit at the MIA. As a mentor, I would strongly recommend and endorse these deviations from the regular course of meetings at Saint John’s. I found Will to be honest, pleasant, highly intelligent, reserved, and possessed of a great sense of humor. A smile from him would equate to a raucous guffaw from someone else his age (16). Sometimes a topic would come up and we would both look at another, both smile, and move on.

We discussed a broad range of topics: What's this stuff about “Begotten, not made”? what's “grace” all about, what happens next; 1) after Confirmation, 2) when we die... Nothing-off limits - everything's confidential.

With 30 years plus of teaching experience working with young people this age, I can say this about mentoring: Do it! It will be more than rewarding, and as usual, you will get much more out of it than you put in. Be careful not to preach or be judgmental; try to get your candidate to do at least half of the talking, and keep your own sense of humor – you'll likely need it.

To sum up my experience: when Jean asked me if I would be interested in mentoring again, I said, “Yes!”
By Ellie Watkins

This year during Lent, Children, Youth, and Family Assistant Kellan Weyer helped to organize an All-Parish Movie Series on Wednesday nights, bringing the youth group together with adults from Saint John’s for food, films, and conversation. It proved to be a meaningful experience for many who attended.

Jill Thompson said she came to the movie nights because she and her husband John have been coming to Wednesday night Lenten suppers for years. She didn’t know what to expect from an intergenerational event, although she remembered: “I loved youth group when I was young, and I loved being around adults—I always thought I could learn from them.” She found the movie nights “delightful” and full of hospitality.

The participants met each week for an evening that began with a simple soup supper. The first week, Kellan encouraged everyone to sit with someone they didn’t know well. The tables where everyone ended up—a mix of youth, parents, and other adults—became the discussion groups for the rest of Lent.

After the meal, the group watched part of a movie together. The two movies shown during the series were Remember the Titans, about a young boy sent to live with his elderly uncles because his irresponsible mother thinks he can get money out of them, and Secondhand Lions, starring as a way of highlighting that the Christian life is not a learned worldview that needs to be open for challenge daily.”

Jill said, “It’s the first year I’ve gotten to hang out with the youth group. It’s great. It just feels like family in here, to me.” She enjoyed the chance to share meals and stories, and connect with everyone more individually. “People are just being themselves…The youth are all their own people. It’s fun to be around them.”

Roger also enjoyed the chance to get to know the youth better. “There’s a group of kids who have a particular way of communicating. There’s some very independent thinkers. This microcosm of kids has huge diversity in it.” It was meaningful to him to get everyone to contribute. “You tell them, ‘What you have to say is important. Let’s hear from you,’” Patty said, “I don’t know if I imparted that to them, but I do know they gave me some good things to think about.”

When asked what she will take from the movie series into Easter, Jill said she would actually stop and talk to youth more, instead of just saying “Hi,” because she sees how they are open to conversation. Patty also was impacted by the intergenerational connections that formed. “I found it really nice to get to know the youth a bit and enjoy being greeted by them at church by name. It makes us all feel like part of the same community.”

Roger believes strongly that the church needs to have a strong intergenerational component. Interacting with youth gives them a chance to learn why our liturgy and rituals are meaningful, so they can become meaningful to the youth as well. “If you’re not participating in intergenerational relational evangelism, it’s like you’re saying the church is not worth continuing.” Roger also found the intergenerational nature of the series powerful as a way of highlighting that the Christian life is not static, but one of continual change. Talking to people of all ages lets you “see where adults and kids are coming from, and be grateful for the conversations you’ve had and will have, and that others have had and will.”

Jill also noted the impact and importance of intergenerational events for connecting groups that wouldn’t normally see each other. “It’s opening up conversations...I’m happy about that.”

Roger observed that both movies have different groups with totally different worldviews who then have to interact with each other. “It’s a real reminder that how we see the world working is a learned worldview that needs to be open for challenge daily.”

Jill said, “It’s really the first year I’ve gotten to hang out with the youth group. It’s great. It just feels like family in here, to me.” She enjoyed the chance to share meals and stories, and connect with everyone more individually. “People are just being themselves…The youth are all their own people. It’s fun to be around them.”

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By Cammie Beattie

As the early spring arrives, our partners from Holy Apostles are busy planting for the coming market season.

The Farmer’s Market has been a regular fixture at Saint John’s since 2009 with wonderful farmers who come back year after year. Song has always given us the promise of better weather with her early flower and asparagus sales in the gathering space. Her daughter Elizabeth can be seen manning her booth as the summer wears on and Song is busy keeping ahead of her crops. We have enjoyed watching Victor and Hosua’s girls grow up; two have made their way through medical school and one more has gone off to college. We are lucky to still have “Princess” Diana, who easily qualifies as saleswoman of the year.

Wana Lue continues to farm in honor of her parents, Lao and Sao, who began with the market in 2009. She farms in her “spare time” after her job, which keeps her busy from 5am until 4pm each weekday.

The Farmers’ Market will start in its 2017 season on Mother’s Day, May 14, either in the gathering space or in the gym (to be determined). We will move outside at the beginning of June, weather and crops permitting.

Once again, Saint John’s will participate in the Fields to Families program, which funds delivery of a truckload of produce each week from the market to the Hallie Q Brown food shelf. We have a challenge grant of $1500; you are welcome to contribute either through donations at the market or with a check written to Saint John’s with “Fields to Families” on the memo line.

The Farmer’s Market is not merely a nice way for the farmers to sell their produce and the parishioners from Saint John’s to have a steady supply of fresh food. A closer look will tell you there is so much more. Our volunteer hosts, who are essential in providing information and encouraging donations to the Fields to Families program, will usually tell you that they find both God and new friends somewhere amongst the lettuce, the new potatoes, and the raspberries.

“Church in the summer for me is now associated with healthy eating and relationships with our wonderful Hmong farmer partners and friends,” explains Linda Lindeke. “I am honored to link the market to the neighborhood and passersby through conversations, greeting children, dogs, and all who find us behind the hedges. I feel it is a powerful ministry on multiple levels.”

Longtime members of the neighborhood are delighted to see the market back every year, and new residents find a pleasant surprise on their Sunday explorations.

Plan to shop the market this summer and enjoy one of the warmest and most delicious ways that we at Saint John’s come to know God, know love, and know neighbor.
**THE JUDGE**

A PORTRAIT OF GREG TORRENCE

By the Rev. Barbara Mraz

He was baptized recently at Saint John’s at the 8:00 service with kids from the youth group as his sponsors. He is an attorney who is presently a Human Services judge for the Minnesota Department of Human Services, having to make tough calls about people appealing their benefits. He is a 64”, black, married, gay man who has found places in the culture and in the church to give back, and he notes that he is “generally pretty happy.”

Born in San Francisco in 1963, Greg was raised in Sacramento and attended Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church with his grandfather, who was a deacon at the church. Greg went to a predominantly black high school and then on to college at the University of California-Davis, earning a degree in Applied Economies. There were 13,000 people and only 270 black students. Many of his white classmates had never talked to a black person before. He remembers, “Some of them asked to touch my hair! One person asked me, ‘Why do you all look like loud colors?’ Since I’m a soft-color kind of guy, this surprised me. Later I realized he was referencing the character JJ on the 1970’s sitcom Good Times—but I thought, ‘At least you’ve got to be grateful for the question....’”

Law school followed, then work as public defender. “Even though I represented the accused, it was hard to separate the basic rights involved from condemning the behavior. There was so much at stake, like defendants’ liberty for a good part of their lives. There is a high burnout rate among public defenders.”

He next worked with the Office of Lawyers Professional Responsibility. Greg welcomed “an opportunity to police the professional.” The majority of “discipline” was dispensable and was used for bad behavior, and the public’s perception was that the courts were not subject to discipline. There was an obvious need for the church to reclaim the primary ministry of Jesus—the ministry of “being with.”

Greg enjoys the youth group at Saint John’s: “They’re so smart, they’re curious, there’s so much going on in their lives and sometimes they have no filters! When things go too far in the group, I just remind them that the behavior doesn’t match our values and we move on from there.”

Greg is now employed by the Department of Human Services as a judge, hearing appeals from people who believe they have been denied benefits. “There is a heavy volume of cases, but at least we are dealing with real people and not agencies.” About ninety percent of his hearings are accomplished via telephone hearing or video conferencing! Greg notes that a sad situation occurs when people are granted food stamps and later the system determines they aren’t qualified. They can be asked to pay the money back. However, often some kind of compromise can be reached.

After dropping in to Saint John’s now and then for several years, Greg began attending regularly and enrolled in Basics Classes in 2016. “I wanted to become part of the church. I thought I’d been baptized—I really did—but when my mom couldn’t find the paperwork, I decided maybe I hadn’t been, so I decided it was time.”

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For Greg, Jesus moved into his community: “I was deeply edified and inspired by The Reverend Doctor Wells’ wisdom and presence. Our time with him has given me new energy to look again at the ministries of Saint John’s, how I work as a leader in our community, and experienced personal transformation as she discovered the beauty of simply being present.”

The story of Easter which we are now celebrating is the story of God’s commitment to be with us. This one brief moment where God seems to be working and being for us is buttressed and supported on either side with a vast story of God’s willingness and desire to be with us. There in the garden, after conquering death and sin, Jesus showed up again, to be with us.

**The Ministry of “Being With”**

By Jered Weber-Johnson

In March we had the pleasure to welcome the Reverend Doctor Samuel Wells, vicar of Saint Martin-in-the-Fields, London, and one of the world’s leading theological minds for a weekend of reflection, learning, and worship. The weekend began with an all day Saturday seminar on the subject of “Living Without Enemies” (also the title of the Lenten read, cowritten by Sam Wells and Marcia Owens.) It continued with Sam preaching at our Sunday morning Eucharists and offering a forum in between. Finally, it concluded Sunday night with a service of music featuring the St. Martin’s Voices and a series of reflections by Sam Wells on the history of St. Martin-in-the-Fields.

Throughout all of it, the resounding message was of the need for the church to reclaim the primary ministry of Jesus—the ministry of “being with.” Wells spent a great deal of time Saturday illuminating what he believes are the four models of social engagement: Working For, Working With, Being For, and Being With. Walking us through these, he arrives at the conclusion that while all four have stumbling blocks and advantages, the most thrust of Jesus’ ministry was a ministry of “being with.”

He then encouraged us to take this as a model for our own social engagement—to focus the majority of our ministry on relationship, presence, and interdependence.

Sam offered us this thought: “Being with” begins by largely rejecting the problem-solution axis that dominates both the previous models... It sees the vast majority of life, and certainly the most significant moments of life, in these terms: love can’t be achieved; death can’t be fixed; pregnancy and birth aren’t a problem needing a solution.”

Christians, says Sam, need to worry less about solving problems—to stop seeing the world in terms of its problems, and people in terms of their deficits—and remember the end to which we are all called is relationship with God and relationship with each other. Our job, he said, is to “enjoy people for their own sake.”

Of course this doesn’t mean the church or Christians shouldn’t be concerned about pain and suffering, or that we shouldn’t try to alleviate it. But it does mean we may take a different approach than the rest of the world.

Using the model of gun violence prevention, Sam described in his Sunday forum the story of his relationship with Marcia Owens and her story of transformation. What started as a passion of hers to end gun violence in Durham, NC through legislative solutions became a ministry of presence and solidarity. Marcia’s life changed slowly as she spent time in the neighborhood where the shootings were most prevalent. She began to see her work not as addressing the problem of violence, but of getting to know the community most affected by the violence. As her focus shifted from “working for” to “being with” the community, she stopped dividing people into separate categories of victims and offenders, and experienced personal transformation as she discovered the beauty of simply being present.

I was deeply edified and inspired by The Reverend Doctor Wells’ wisdom and presence. Our time with him has given me new energy to look again at the ministries of Saint John’s, how I work as a leader in our community, and even to how I live my life as a neighbor and citizen.

I am grateful to have heard him and “be with him.”